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A  
CORRECT STATEMENT  
OF THE  
VARIOUS SOURCES

FROM WHICH  
THE HISTORY

OF THE  
Administration of John Adams  
WAS COMPILED,

AND  
THE MOTIVES FOR ITS SUPPRESSION  
BY COL. BURR :

WITH  
SOME OBSERVATIONS



ON A  
NARRATIVE,  
BY A CITIZEN OF NEW-YORK.

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BY JOHN WOOD,  
AUTHOR OF THE SAID HISTORY.

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New-York:  
PRINTED AND SOLD, FOR THE AUTHOR, BY G. F. HOPKINS.

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## A CORRECT STATEMENT, &c.



No task is more difficult or painful than a proper vindication for a mistatement of the actions of party or of individuals, occasioned by erroneous information or a too implicit confidence in intriguing characters ; yet no labour ought to be esteemed more praise-worthy than an investigation of this nature, a correction of errors and a research after truth. The pride or obstinacy inherent in human nature, too often refuses this tribute which virtue requires, and men in general are unfortunately over-zealous to pursue with avidity that road which ignorance once has dictated, rather than to retreat into the more noble path of honest integrity. The politics of America appear to a British alien, on a superficial survey, only as a simple question respecting the preference of aristocracy ; but, after a little experience, and a more minute knowledge of parties, a scene of faction and intrigue, pervading all ranks of society, gradually unfolds itself, in a manner that must excite the astonishment even of those best versed in the arts of European policy. The unwary foreigner, acquainted only with those principles fixed by the constitution of the states, readily embraces the cause of that party which appears to show most address, and most zeal in defending the rights of that people among whom he has chosen his future residence. The real patriots of this description are most frequently men who conceal themselves in silent obscurity, unwilling to mix in the bustle of the political world, until

the invaded rights of their country call them forth to action, and expose to view their latent virtues. The licentious, the needy and the ambitious, are in general the apparent patriots of every country, whom accident most frequently introduces to the acquaintance of the unknown stranger. With these men, who daily promise relief and improvements to the people, he contracts an acquaintance, partakes in their career of popular applause, and gradually imbibes tenets that, under other circumstances, he would have spurned with contempt.

Such is the unfortunate lot of most of the British patriots who have emigrated to this country : intoxicated with that love of liberty which an hereditary right has implanted in the breast of every Briton, they view every stain which tarnishes the edifice of their constitution with the deepest regret, and, as if actuated by the frenzy of parental affection, they wish for the total dissolution of the object nearest their affections, rather than be the painful witnesses of its decay. Unable to accomplish their desires, in the moment of mad despair they withdraw themselves from their native homes, and as a last resource retreat to that country which was colonized by their ancestors under like motives and like patriotism. There it is their utmost ambition to maintain those sacred rights of which they were deprived in their own country, and trusting the sincerity of every clamorous advocate of liberty as impressed with the same sentiments, they enlist in his party and confide in his integrity, until some fortunate accident dispels the cloud of hypocrisy which veils him from their eyes, and discovers the patriot from the impostor.

I might indulge more largely in this prefatory digression, but vanity or prejudice would probably be attributed as the

cause ; and were I to give a detail of those circumstances which led myself to America, and of the first acquaintances I formed upon my arrival, it would justly be deemed as proceeding from an egotism, tedious to the reader and unfruitful to the public. I shall therefore, without further apology, enter upon the subject which constitutes the title of the following pages :—

ON the 19th of June, 1801, I entered into an agreement with Messrs. Barlas and Ward, booksellers in New-York, to write a History of the United States of America during the Administration of President Adams. As the transactions which have since taken place, have arisen in a great measure from the opposite characters of these two booksellers, it may not be improper if I bestow a little attention on this circumstance.—Mr. Ward is a young man of the strictest integrity and honour, and as to politics has taken no active part in favour of either party, but Mr. Barlas, unfortunately for himself and mankind, is in a degree a character of a different complexion ; with his acquaintances he professes himself the warmest friend to the administration of Mr. Jefferson, and often insinuates that he has occasionally contributed to the aid of the anti-federal prints, while to the public he assumes the modest appearance of clerical indifference. Mr. Barlas, however, as being the oldest partner in this business, had the preference given to him in all matters of dispute. By our letter of agreement a clause was inserted at the desire of Mr. Barlas, that the work should be finished by the end of August or September. I did not object to the clause at the instant of subscribing the articles, not doubting but Messrs. Barlas and Ward would, for their own interest, allow the period to be prolonged, if necessary. Previous to the commence-



ment of the work, I had calculated upon my labour, rather as a field of amusement than that of laborious research ; it was impossible to have conceived that the annals of a government of a new country, such as the United States, for four years, should be enveloped in mystery, cabal, and intrigue, and that all the public prints should be a collection of falsehoods fabricated by the hirelings of party ; but I soon discovered, that to investigate the truth from volumes of newspapers devoted to opposite interests, would require several years in place of a few months. Before the stipulated period was expired, I communicated my sentiments to Mr. Ward, and requested a prolongation of the period, to which he appeared to give his cordial assent, but upon conversing with Mr. Barlas, they both insisted, I suppose from the advice of Barlas, that the book should be finished within the time prescribed, otherwise that I would forfeit the penalty that I had agreed upon in my letter of the 19th of June.

Thus circumstanced, I was under the necessity of throwing together my materials, I may say without either proper arrangement or due consideration. These materials were principally collected from the *Aurora*, Mr. Duane's private letters, and Callender's works, besides some occasional hints I received from gentlemen in New-York and Philadelphia.

My correspondence with Mr. Duane, or rather his letters to me, originated not through Barlas and Ward, as he has stated in his letter in the *Aurora*, but from an application which I made to him respecting the letters of Curtius : This application was made about the first of July, and from that time until the month of October, Mr. Duane

sent me, occasionally, information as to characters and events, sometimes couched in the form of letters, and at other times expressed in the form of history, leaving it to my own discretion to alter the language or not. Notwithstanding this active part which Mr. Duane had in the compilation of the history, he is pleased to assert in the *Aurora* of the 12th July, that it contains neither veracity or dignity. Such an observation would certainly have proceeded with more propriety from any other critic than Mr. Duane, when the facts furnished by him are well known to be the most false and libellous in the whole book. These facts, as he termed them in his letters, related principally to Mr. Adams, and compose almost all the anecdotes inserted in the history respecting the late president. The fallacy of the stories reported to me by Mr. Duane, I was then ignorant of, but can now assure the public, that I have been informed by persons more respectable than Mr. Duane, that there is not the smallest foundation either for the anecdote of the Alchemist, mentioned in page 503, or for the stories respecting Mr. Adams and Doctor Franklin, related in chapter XII. Mr. Duane was particularly sedulous in his letters in requesting that I should by no means omit to describe, in the most pointed manner, the enmity of Mr. Adams towards Dr. Franklin ; but upon a fair investigation of this matter, I have discovered that Mr. Adams never displayed any marks of hatred to Doctor Franklin himself, but only towards Bache the printer, who raised Mr. Duane to his present eminence. This was certainly an act of gratitude in Mr. Duane, but that species of gratitude which ought to receive the severest censure, the raising the reputation of a friend at the expense of his enemy, and, without having the boldness to execute the stratagem himself, to impose the task upon a stranger. The character given of James Ross, of Pennsylvania, in page

184, was drawn from the *Aurora*, but as to the truth of the charges there adduced against Mr. Ross, I have not had an opportunity of determining. The probability, however, is, that they are false, as they have been reported by Mr. Duane. The characters given of the members of congress (who voted for the alien and sedition bills, that of Mr. Bingham and Mr. Ross excepted) in the history, from page 182 to the end of the sixth chapter, were entirely taken from Callender's Prospect, pages 122, 123, 124, 125, 144, 145, 146, & 147, of his first volume. The language is a little altered, but the reader will perceive that the sentiments are the same. The character of Mr. Bingham I obtained from the friends of Mr. Duane when at Philadelphia. I however am induced to suppose by other information, that although Mr. Bingham is not the brightest man in the world, his enemies have extremely exaggerated his faults. The articles entitled *British piracy*, were entirely extracted from Callender's works, his *Sketches of America*, and *Annual Register*. The contents of the sixth chapter of the History, from the commencement to page 168, were drawn from the second chapter of the first volume of Callender's Prospect. The account I have given of Blount's conspiracy, and the negociation of this country with the Directory of France, were collected from the *Aurora*, as also were my remarks on the constitution of Connecticut, and the characters of Mr. Trumbull, Mr. Treadwell, Mr. Thomas Grosevenor, Mr. Thomas Seymour, Mr. Aaron Austin, and Mr. David Dagget. These last are to be found in the *Aurora* of April, 1801.

In the character of General Hamilton, which Mr. Duane thinks proper to call a panegyric fraught with falsehood, I have certainly committed some errors, but the principal



error is one, which detracts from the integrity of that able officer in place of adding an undue lustre to his virtues. The reader will easily perceive that I allude to the stale story of Mrs. Reynolds. Following the mistatement of Calender, I have represented that woman as an amiable and virtuous wife, seduced from the affections of her husband by artifice and intrigue. That woman, however, I have been informed from the best authority, from the authority even of her own acquaintances, to have been one of those unfortunates, who, destitute of every regard for virtue or honour, traffic with the follies of youth, and lay their snares to entrap the feeling heart and benevolent mind; such was the origin of her acquaintance with Mr. Hamilton, whose unsuspecting generosity became the victim of her art and duplicity. The dates in the article of his life, are also erroneous, as well as the island of his birth, which was Nevis and not St. Croix. The anecdote relating to Mr. Hamilton at the capture of the redoubts at York-town, I have read in several histories of the American war; as also in the Anti-Jacobin Review, in reviewing Mr. Hamilton's letter to Mr. Adams, but Mr. Hamilton himself, I am informed, denies it.

Respecting the biography of Mr. Burr, which the writer of the narrative calls a *master piece* of the Hyperbolic, the materials for writing it were not furnished by Mr. Burr, as the narrative erroneously states. Mr. Burr and I have been acquainted for about two years, but not intimately: our acquaintance arose from being employed by Mr. Burr in the line of my profession, as a classical teacher, in which capacity I have received from Mr. Burr every mark of civility, which might be expected. Mr. Cheetham was the first person who acquainted Mr. Burr, that I was employed in writing a history of the Administration of president



Adams, and I was informed by Mr. Cheetham, that Mr. Burr expressed a desire to see me respecting it; I accordingly saw Mr. Burr, but soon perceived, that although he approved of the undertaking, he felt a proper reluctance to give me any information on the subject; in the course of the summer I saw Mr. Burr several times afterwards, but our conversation, to the best of my recollection, respected some pupils, acquaintances of Mr. Burr's, whom I was engaged in instructing, and not politics. In the month of October, I waited one evening on Mr. Burr, to request he would direct me to some person, who might have it in his power to give me a correct statement of the capture of the British Piquet, narrated in page 458. Mr. Burr very frankly referred me to a captain Gardner, of a Newburg sloop, who acted as his serjeant on that expedition; in the course of our conversation, Mr. Burr naturally dropped several circumstances, that occurred during the war, by which means, and the information I obtained from capt. Gardner, together with Hardie's Biography of president Burr, and the journals of the Senate, I drew up that imperfect sketch, which I inserted in the history, which if incorrect, either as to facts or composition, the blame alone is to be attributed to captain Gardner and myself, and not to Mr. Burr. The life of Mr. Jefferson was composed from a biography, given of Mr. Jefferson in an English publication, entitled "Public characters of 1801," a small pamphlet published by Hembold of Philadelphia, and the Aurora. The anecdote respecting lord Dunmore and Mr. Jefferson, I had from an American student of Virginia, when at Edinburgh.

These were in short the principal sources from which I compiled my history of the Administration of president Adams. Several trifling incidents, which are scattered

through the volume, I received from individuals; but as they are of no moment to one party or another, their detail would be unnecessary, and to bring before the public their authors would be an improper action. I shall, however, add, that from the sources from which the history in general has been compiled, it would be improper for the reader to place any reliance on the facts which it contains, or to regard the work in any degree as a correct statement of the events which occurred during the administration of Mr. Adams.

In November, 1801, Mr. Burr visited Philadelphia, as the Narrative states, but upon what business I was ignorant. Previous to his return, when the History was nearly printed, several concurring circumstances which took place, and which accident threw in my way, began to unfold the views of those men to whom I had been attached, and plainly discovered that I had been deceived in most parts with regard to the characters and events which I had described. To re-print the whole edition was an expense which my situation in life could not admit, nor was it to be expected that the booksellers would willingly accede to such a proposal. Thus embarrassed how to act, I expressed my doubts to Mr. Ward of the propriety of sending forth such a volume to the world without taking the advice of some person whose experience in the political world was known, and whose legal abilities were undoubted. Mr. Brockholst Livingston was the gentleman we both agreed upon to whom the History should be shown previous to its publication. Mr. Burr, however, in the mean time, returned from Philadelphia, and chance having thrown him in my way in Nassau-street, after the usual compliments of the day, he requested I should bring him a copy of the History that evening, which I accordingly

did. Colonel Burr turned to the article relating to himself, and observing some errors in the dates, which I borrowed from Hardie's Biography, respecting his father, he desired that I should leave the copy with him until the next morning, and that he would correct them. I called at his house next day at an appointed hour, and found Colonel Burr with the History before him. Perceiving from the leaves being cut, that he had read great part of it, I commenced the conversation by expressing a regret at those circumstances which had led me into so many errors respecting certain characters described in the volume, and, at the same time, solicited his advice how to act in such a critical affair. Colonel Burr first inquired in what manner and upon what terms the History had been published; after being informed that Messrs. Barlas and Ward were the proprietors, he said there was no other alternative but to purchase the edition from them, adding, at the same time, that as he knew I had compiled it from the best motives to the republican interest, I should not be a loser, but that he and his friends would defray the expense:—He therefore ordered that I should, without delay, make the best possible bargain with Messrs. Barlas and Ward for the edition and copy-right, but to conceal his name in the transaction.

This is an exact statement of the origin of the first interview I had with Mr. Burr respecting the suppression of the History. The Narrative states, that the errors I had committed in his biography, would have made Mr. Burr about fifty, whereas he stated himself he was not more than forty-five years of age. This is a mistake; for although these errors tended to add a few years to the age of Mr. Burr, yet Mr. Burr particularly expressed his only



motive to have them rectified, was to show the world the early misfortune he laboured under of having been deprived of his mother when in the age of infancy, for I had mentioned, in my History, that after the death of president Burr, the care of his education devolved on Mrs. Burr. This circumstance I have thought particularly necessary to notice, not only as a matter of justice to Mr. Burr, but to expose the malicious intent of the writer of the Narrative, who, to promote the views of his party, and detract from the integrity of Mr. Burr, concludes his paragraph by the following sarcastic expression :—" To one who is looking forward to the Presidency, to gain at the age of fifty, five years on the side of youth, is no inconsiderable acquisition."

After leaving Mr. Burr on the morning of the 10th of December, I waited on Mr. Ward and communicated to him my desire of purchasing the edition and copy-right of the History, with the intention of suppressing it, adding, that a particular friend was anxious this should be done, both on account of the republican interest which the publication would injure, as well as from a personal regard to myself; and that if he and Mr. Barlas would agree to any reasonable terms, my friend would immediately close with them. Mr. Ward appeared entirely satisfied, but said it was necessary to have the consent of Mr. Barlas, who he supposed would agree upon the payment of all their expenses. I saw Mr. Ward in the afternoon of that day, after having conversed with Mr. Barlas, but was astonished to find that Barlas could not be brought to an agreement, except upon very extravagant terms. I saw Mr. Burr towards evening, and related to him my fears of the impossibility of treating with my booksellers, Mr. Barlas in

particular. Mr. Burr thought it an unfortunate circumstance, but said he had no doubt if the danger of publishing a libellous book was properly explained to them, that they would agree ; he also inquired if I knew who were the particular acquaintances or patrons of Mr. Barlas ; I mentioned Dr. Wilson of Columbia college as one, upon which Mr. Burr promised he should see that professor the next morning upon the subject. In our conversation this evening, Mr. Burr observed, that independent of the libellous matter, I had fallen into several inconsistencies in my description of characters, particularly that of General Washington. Mr. Burr's opinion of the abilities of Washington, I confess, was not the most favourable ; but certain am I, that I never heard Mr. Burr express himself in such derogatory terms of General Washington as the friends and party of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Clinton always do.—No one knows this so well as the writer of the Narrative—no one has heard so much abuse thrown on the character of Washington in the companies which he frequents as this same citizen ; but want of candour has caused him to attribute the opinions of his own party particularly to Mr. Burr ; for he knew the prejudice of the public was greatly in favour of Washington ; he was not ignorant that could this odium be thrown upon Mr. Burr alone, that a principal point would be gained, and he therefore has endeavoured to ruin the popularity of Mr. Burr, by apparently reprobating those opinions which he and his friends foster in private, and nourish together.

In regard to General Dayton, Mr. Burr disapproved that in a history of important events, personal transactions should have a place ; that the letters between Dayton and Childs proved nothing more than a commercial transaction, which has been practised by many others besides Mr. Day-

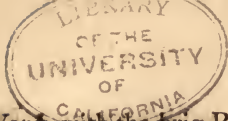
ton ; that the violence of party rage often threw the blackest colouring over the most trifling matters, which it did in the transaction between Dayton and Childs ; and I believe he might have added, that from the letters themselves, it appeared that Childs was indebted to Dayton to a considerable amount. Mr. Burr also remarked, that I had been led into an extravagant mistake with regard to the anecdote I related of Mr. Hamilton at the capture of the redoubt at York-Town ; that the Marquis de la Fayette was a man of the greatest humanity, and that my information must have been erroneous. Respecting Mr. Jefferson, the conversation arose from Mr. Burr's observing, that I mentioned in my History, that, in the first meeting of congress after the election of Mr. Adams, Mr. Jefferson should have addressed the senate in an extempore speech : Mr. Burr told me this was a mistake. Remarking upon the character of Mr. Jefferson, I observed to Mr. Burr, that although I regarded the President as a man of sound judgment, and well fitted to fill the office he now holds, yet, I by no means deemed him a character of enterprise or of the first genius, understanding by the word genius, a faculty of mind which Providence has granted to a few individuals who have explored the hidden paths of nature, and by their actions, have astonished the ordinary intellect of man. To this opinion Mr. Burr appeared to give his assent, but never dropped a single expression in any manner or degree disrespectful of Mr. Jefferson. He seemed also astonished that I should have represented Mr. Pinckney as a man of less integrity than Mr. Hamilton, knowing the former, without any disparagement to the latter, to be a man of the strictest honour in the United States. These were the substance of all the remarks as to characters, which Mr. Burr made to me ; what he may have said to others I know not, nor shall I attempt to investigate.



I saw Mr. Ward on Friday the 11th of December, and represented to him the dangers which would await Barlas and him, as well as me, from prosecutions, if the history were published. He appeared to be of the like opinion, but said it was impossible to convince Barlas, who had taken the advice of his friends, and saw nothing in the history that would be libellous; he urged another objection to the suppression, that a manuscript copy had been sent to London a few days before with a Mr. Hodson, by the ship Juliana, in order to be published, and unless it were recalled the suppression could not take place. I immediately communicated this intelligence to Mr. Burr, who was at dinner with some company; he came to the door and charged me by all means, to order Messrs. Barlas & Ward to stop the publication in London. The brig Recovery was to sail that evening for Greenock, and no other vessel was to sail for several days. Messrs. Barlas and Ward agreed to write to Hodson to stop the publication, on condition I should either give up the name of the person with whom I was negotiating, or give them proper security for any loss they might incur from stopping the publication in England. This I was unwilling to do without orders from Mr. Burr, and therefore I returned to his house, but unfortunately he had gone out. The Recovery was to sail at six o'clock, by which circumstance I had no other alternative than to give Messrs. Barlas and Ward the name of Mr. Burr, or drop every idea of suppressing the History. In this dilemma, I preferred mentioning the name of Mr. Burr, in expectation he would never be known as the suppressor—Messrs. Barlas and Ward having given me an obligation for 300 dollars to that purpose.

I saw Mr. Burr upon Saturday the 12th, and informed him, that orders had been sent by Messrs. Barlas and





Ward, with the brig Recovery, to stop the English edition; at the same time I put into his hands, copies of letters which had been written for that purpose, with which he seemed perfectly satisfied. The only difficulty which now remained, was to compromise the matter with Barlas and Ward, to effect which, Mr. Burr advised me to write to them the following letter, and not the one which is first inserted in the Narrative, which is incorrect, false, and erroneous.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING discovered, lately, that the History of the Administration of John Adams, which I compiled for you, is, in several parts, false and erroneous, as it regards public events, and entirely incorrect as it regards individual characters, I have the most anxious desire that it should be suppressed, for which purpose I engage to indemnify you for the neat expenses of paper and print, and to furnish you with an altered copy, fit for the press, in the space of ten days—the copy-right of which I assign over to you in the same manner as the former. In the event of your non-compliance, I shall feel myself under the necessity to publish the above to the world, and also to set on foot a new work in vindication of those characters I may have injured, so that the whole of the malice and injury done, which never were intended by me, may rest on you alone. I remain, Gentlemen, your's, &c.

JN. WOOD.

NEW-YORK, 12 Dec. 1801.

*To Messrs. Barlas, Ward and Co.*

I received an answer from Messrs. Barlas and Ward, refusing my offer; but agreeing to suppress the work for two thousand dollars, or fifteen hundred dollars with a new

manuscript copy. These proposals neither meeting Mr. Burr's approbation nor my own, it was necessary to fall on some other expedient to suppress the work. Mr. Burr naturally supposed, that if a new edition, having all the errors and mistakes in the former corrected, and real facts inserted, could be privately printed, and when finished, to be offered to Messrs. Barlas and Ward, in exchange for their incorrect and libellous book; they could not possibly, even regarding their own interest, have the smallest objection; but if, contrary both to prudence and reason, they should persevere in their plan of publishing the original work, the only remedy was to publish the new edition, and furnish them with an appendix correcting the errors in the old one. This scheme, to which there can be attached neither blame or censure, was alone frustrated by Barlas and Ward daily lowering their demands, until at last they offered to suppress the History for 1100 dollars, independent of 100 dollars to Mr. Barlas for his share of the copyright, Mr. Ward having relinquished his claim, in order to receive the profits arising from the printing of the new work. These were the terms finally agreed upon between Messrs. Barlas, Ward, and myself, and with which Mr. Burr appeared satisfied, when he left New-York for Washington. The night previous to his departure I saw him, and he informed me that he had given orders to W. P. Van Ness to settle the business, meaning the payment of the money.

Had this immediately been effected, most probably the world would never have been made acquainted with the transaction, and malicious characters would not have had an opportunity of throwing their insinuations, and darting their venom with impunity, as they have now done, against the

second character in the United States. The particular cause of the failure of the immediate payment of the money, I am not acquainted with ; whether it was owing to Mr. Burr, or the negligence of his friends, I know not. It might have proceeded from Mr. Burr, hearing his name became public in the business, which it did a few days after his departure from New-York, owing to the folly of Barlas, who ran among his friends, and particularly to Mr. George Clinton and Mr. Cheetham, to advise with them (as he said) how he should proceed against the Vice President.

Mr. Barlas, unfortunately, was made acquainted with all the steps and incidents which had taken place in the transaction ; he knew the alterations which were to be made in the second edition, and before the name of Mr. Burr was revealed to him, I had acquainted him with the observations which the person for whom I was negotiating had made on certain characters in the History ; this was indispensably necessary, as Mr. Ward, as well as Mr. Barlas, insisted on knowing the alterations which were proposed in the new History. These were communicated, I suppose, by Mr. Barlas, to others ; so that in the course of a few days, not only the name of Mr. Burr, as the suppressor of the History, but all the circumstances attending the transaction, were known in most of the private circles in town. The friends of Mr. Burr had, therefore, in his absence, a difficult part to act ; being ignorant, probably, of the express orders which I received from Mr. Burr, in order to conclude a bargain with Messrs. Barlas and Ward, they naturally hesitated about the payment of the money, conceiving, perhaps, that the transaction would tend to hurt Mr. Burr with the Republican interest. As they were all strangers to me, except Mr. Van Ness, no inter-



course was held between us ; while, from a variety of causes, I was on terms of intimacy with several of the friends of Mr. Clinton. This circumstance unluckily created in the minds of the former, suspicions of an unfavourable proceeding in me towards Mr. Burr. This was repeatedly suggested, and reiterated to me by Mr. Clinton's party, whose views I did not then comprehend, and who did not fail to endeavour to rouse, by every possible means, my indignation against the Vice-President. The friends of Mr. Burr, Mr. M. L. Davis in particular, were represented as using every endeavour to blacken my character, by reporting that I received no orders from Mr. Burr, respecting the suppression of the History. Anxious to have the disagreeable business in which I had engaged terminated, I wrote to Mr. Burr, then at Washington, requesting him to order payment of the stipulated sum to Messrs. Barlas and Ward ; and acquainting him, at the same time, that they had formed the resolution of prosecuting for the fulfilment of their agreement with me. Mr. Burr having returned no answer to my letter, I regarded it as a matter of equity due from me to Messrs. Barlas and Ward, that I should furnish them with some document of the transaction which passed between us, as several accidents might arise in the period of a twelvemonth which would deprive them of the benefit of my evidence in a court of justice. I therefore, without any hesitation, gave them an affidavit, expressive of the orders which I received from Mr. Burr relative to the purchase of the edition and copy-right.— This affidavit was given by me, as both Messrs. Barlas and Ward, and Mr. Tunis Wortman will declare, with no other intention but to serve as a proof of the bargain, in the event of my death or absence from New-York. Knowing Mr. Barlas to be a man of weak mind, and in whose

promises of secrecy I could not place the greatest reliance ; I stipulated, previous to making the affidavit, that it should be deposited either with Mr. Ward or Mr. Wortman, and on no condition whatever to be made public, or given to Mr. Barlas. Whether Mr. Barlas made offers of it to others, I know not ; but if he did, it was without Mr. Ward's authority, or mine ; and his attempts would have been fruitless, as he could never have possessed himself of it—and Mr. Duane's story of Mr. Coleman's having offered a thousand dollars for the affidavit, must be a falsehood, for both Mr. Barlas and Mr. Coleman have sufficiently explained to the world their correspondence on that head.

Messrs. Barlas and Ward, being possessed of this affidavit, resorted, as the Narrative states, to Mr. Harison, the late recorder of New-York, in order to have his advice, who, I believe, after the facts were stated, entertained no doubt of Mr. Burr's liability to the payment of the sum agreed upon for the suppression of the edition. A prosecution would then have been instantly instituted against Mr. Burr, had not Mr. Wortman engaged to procure the money by subscription from the friends of Mr. Burr. This proposal of Mr. Wortman's was rather singular, when it is known he never conferred on the subject with a single friend or acquaintance of Mr. Burr's, except Mr. Van Ness : he however contrived to quiet the minds of Messrs. Barlas and Ward for nearly a fortnight, by daily promising them hopes of success without a prosecution ; but Messrs. Barlas and Ward being at length tired out with delays, they were resolved to wait no longer, and had come to the determination of prosecuting, when Mr. Van Ness called one forenoon upon me, and promised to pay the sum of one

thousand dollars, on condition that all the printed copies of the History should be delivered up to him: He added, at the same time, that he did this entirely without the knowledge of Mr. Burr, and was uncertain whether it would meet with his approbation. I immediately communicated this offer to Mr. Ward, who accompanied me to the house of Mr. Van Ness, and the business would, in all probability, have been immediately settled, had Mr. Wortman returned a copy of the History, with which he had been entrusted by Messrs. Barlas and Ward, as counsel for them; but unfortunately this copy *could not be procured!* After repeated promises on the part of Mr. Wortman to return it every hour, he was at length compelled to confess that he had betrayed his trust, by giving a loan of the book to an acquaintance at some distance from town. Thus Messrs. Barlas and Ward were reduced to their former disagreeable suspense. The conduct of Barlas on this occasion was truly laughable. If Mr. Burr was the object of his censorious tongue before, Mr. Wortman was doubly so now; and the ears of strangers, acquaintances, and friends, were assailed by the clamours of the clerical bookseller, narrating the treachery of counsellor Wortman. Mr. Van Ness, however, agreed, that if the book should make its appearance within the period of a week, he would still adhere to his promise. It was at length produced in a fortnight from the specified time, and given by Mr. Ward into the hands of Mr. Van Ness; but several obstacles now occurred, which occasioned a procrastination of the payment. Mr. Van Ness was justly apprehensive lest the copy which Mr. Wortman had, was copied previous to being returned: a bond was therefore required from Messrs. Barlas and Ward, as also one from me, binding ourselves that the History should never appear to the public. Barlas and



Ward, after several days' hesitation, at length complied ; but as I had no other interest but to see the book suppressed, I refused to give any bond, but one in which I bound myself never to publish the same History, reserving the privilege, however, of publishing detached parts from it. This precaution I thought particularly requisite, as I had been informed by Mr. Cheetham and Mr. Riker, that Mr. M. L. Davis, and other friends of Mr. Burr, were sedulous in propagating a report that the History was highly aristocratical, and therefore ought to be suppressed by the republican party. I shall, however, add, in justice to Mr. Davis, that I never heard the report from any other quarter but the Clintonians, and it probably was intended by them for no other purpose but to withdraw my partiality from Mr. Burr ; for every endeavour was used, both by Mr. Riker and Mr. Cheetham, as well as others of their party, to persuade me to give to the public a complete statement of all the conversation which passed between Mr. Burr and myself, respecting the History ; otherwise that I must consider myself as having forfeited, not only their friendship, but that of the republicans in general. This pressing anxiety on the part of Mr. Riker and Mr. Cheetham, was certainly unnecessary, for by one means or another they had possessed themselves of all the circumstances attending the suppression, and were therefore fully as adequate as I was, if they were possessed of candour, to give an accurate statement of them to the world ; but, pursuing their ordinary policy, they were desirous of imposing the task upon another, well knowing the odium they would incur, by an attack upon the Vice President, for a transaction which must be deemed of a laudable nature, when properly explained. Mr. Riker, however, acted in this business in a much more culpable manner than Mr. Cheetham. The latter ought, perhaps,



from the ties of gratitude, to have conducted himself with more propriety towards Mr. Burr; but since he has declared hostilities against the friends of the Vice-President, his behaviour has at least been consistent; he has not, like many others, under the mask of friendship, darted the dagger of scandal at the head of Mr. Burr. He avows himself his public enemy, and acts accordingly. Mr. Riker, on the contrary, affects in the company with Mr. Burr's friends, the greatest attachment to the Vice-President; he expresses his astonishment that it should be supposed he is unfriendly to Mr. Burr; he protests, *upon his honour*, that Mr. Burr will always retain his support, and in a fawning courteous manner launches forth into ridiculous eulogiums upon the abilities and the virtues of Mr. Burr, whom he frequently declares to be one of the greatest men in the Union; and, without any hesitation, places him in the group of talents, over which (in Mr. Riker's opinion) Mr. Jefferson and Mr. De Witt Clinton preside. Yet this same Deputy Attorney General, whom nature has only fitted to act as the cōxcomb of intrigue, with bows and smiles receives the Clintonian faction at his nightly levees, and in the warmest language of effeminate rhetoric declaims against the Vice-President, approves of the proceedings of Mr. Cheetham, and twists, and turns, and searches all the capacity of his brains for new arguments against what the *little fellow* is pleased to term, the *little band*.

Such has been the conduct of Mr. Riker: respecting the Narrative, I shall not assert that either he, or Mr. Cheetham, Mr. Osgood, or Mr. Wortman, or even Mr. Clinton, is the author. This was entrusted to me as a secret, and it shall remain so on my part. I shall only observe, that I had several conversations with the author, and those who

advised with him previous to the publication of the Narrative ; and repeatedly gave it as my opinion, that Mr. Burr's motives were only to prevent the publication of a book which he deemed libellous and incorrect. I confess, that at that period, owing to stories which were artfully told me respecting the attempts of Mr. Burr and his friends, to ruin my character, I would have had no objections to have seen a fair statement of the case published, with such extracts from the History, as to show that it was not wrote by a "tool of Mr. Adams, and Mr. Hamilton's ;" which tale, it was said, Mr. Davis propagated. The insertion of the letters, excepting the first, which was false and incorrect, was not objectionable, as they went to prove only the suppression of the History by me, as an agent of Mr. Burr's ; but as to the comments and observations made by the writer of the Narrative, as well as several mistatements regarding the biography of Mr. Burr, and my conversations with him, I opposed at the instant I saw the proof sheets, and immediately set about writing a correct statement of the Suppression, which I gave, when finished, to Mr. Ward ; but which he, for several reasons, declined publishing. The incorrectness of the Narrative, in this respect, I have made no hesitation of declaring whenever the question was put to me, and frequently, when a silent observer of the conversation of strangers, I have regarded it a matter of justice due to Mr. Burr, to make the circumstance known.

The Narrative states, that Mr. Van Ness penned a certificate, or paper of falsehoods, in order to exculpate Mr. Burr from having had any thing to do with the suppression. This is certainly a mistake ; Mr. Van Ness drew up a paper, giving an account of the transaction, to the best of his knowledge ; but I refused to sign it, as I thought it prefer-

able, if it should be necessary to subscribe my name to any statement, that it ought to be public, and not private.

Such was the origin and conclusion of a transaction, which, though innocent and praise-worthy of itself, and which few men, except Mr. Burr, would have had the generosity to have done, has yet been construed and twisted into a plot against the administration of Mr. Jefferson. When I mention the name of our President, I trust it will not be supposed that I include Mr. Jefferson in that band who have raised the voice of calumny, not only against Mr. Burr, but against every honest man, and every virtuous deed. The promoters of this villainous scheme, it is to be hoped, are only confined to the state of New-York: their views are not to support Mr. Jefferson more than Mr. Burr, or, in short, any one individual, but the idol of their party, Mr. Dewitt Clinton. This is not denied, but proudly confessed in their private meetings and secret circles; and at the tables of their political debauch, the name of Dewitt Clinton, and success to his election as Vice President, frequently precede as a toast, either the constitution of the states, or the statesman of Monticello. It is not my intention, in these pages, either to be an advocate for Mr. Burr, or Mr. Jefferson; but candour requires it, that when malice provokes popular resentment against any individual, by unjust and crafty means, the slander should be checked, and the lurking assassin of character, with his fawning treachery, exposed to view. Mr. Deputy Attorney General Riker is not the only personal enemy who acts in private against Mr. Burr; Mr. Counsellor Wortman is not inferior in this respect—but an insinuating laugh covers the designs of the former, while the mark of Cain stamped in the womb upon the forehead of the latter, holds him forth to the world as a person for



honesty to avoid, and for prudence to guard against. Mr. Wortman is, however, less to be dreaded on this account, for in such a countenance treachery always displays itself, and the schemes of infamy are easily defeated; but the modest smiles of Riker (from whose apparent sympathetic eyes a ray of compassion perpetually beams) frequently beguile the most guarded acquaintance, and deceive the most wary opponent. There are others again who trim about oscillating in the medium between the Vice President and Mr. Clinton. One of the leading characters of this description is Mr. Gelston: this man, fearful perhaps of being displaced, makes ample amends for the political integrity which his predecessor, Mr. Sands, displayed when in office, whose only object was a just and faithful discharge of the important trust vested in the collectorship of New-York. But Mr. Gelston, if we may judge from his conduct, regards the study and practice of political intrigue as of much more importance to the community, than the labour of investigating the imports and exports of the state. Determined upon figuring on the theatre of politics, and of partaking in that political bustle which accident has created, without incurring the displeasure of either the President or Vice President, he cultivates the favour of both Clintonians and Burrites, presses with great cordiality the hand of Mr. Cheetham, dines with Mr. Burr, and with the utmost complaisance spends the evening with Mr. Clinton. Another of these accommodating satellites, I am sorry to say, belongs to that order of men whom christian charity ought to mark, and in whose actions christian candour ought to be an unerring characteristic. The reader, perhaps, may suppose I wish to insinuate Dr. Linn, as several unjust assertions were thrown upon the character of that worthy clergyman in the History of Adams' Administration, but the remarks.

there made were from misinformation, and from an ignorance of his works. The reverend gentleman here alluded to, is a man whose name is as significant of his thoughts as it is expressive of his actions: I mean no other than *Dr. M<sup>c</sup>Knight*, who, while he courts the Clinton interest at the table of the Governor of the State, opposes with the friends of Mr. Burr the daring and ambitious spirit of Mr. Dewitt, converses with Mr. Riker upon Divinity, endeavours to prove the christianity of Mr. Jefferson, and often laments, it is said, a want of the same orthodoxy in Mr. Burr. The champion and hero of duplicity is, however, Mr. Duane. To recite the various tricks and schemes this fellow has practised, since the death of Bache left him the editorship of the *Aurora*, would compose a nauseous detail of several volumes, but I shall here restrict myself solely to those circumstances in his conduct which are connected with the History of the Administration of President Adams. I have already stated, that, in general, all the circumstances furnished by Mr. Duane in his letters to me, proved afterwards to be the grossest falsehoods, most probably fabricated by himself, like his stupid tale respecting an intercourse which General Hamilton and I are said to have carried on by the means of a Scotchman, a tutor in Mr. Hamilton's family, as if Mr. Hamilton, were he even inclined to communicate his sentiments to another living in the same place, could not do it but by the medium of a third person. Mr. Duane was particularly unfortunate in this invention, as it happens Mr. Hamilton never employed a tutor in his family, neither Scotch or Irish, his children having been educated at the public schools of New-York.

Duane, being afraid that the contents of his private letters would be made public after the History was said to be

suppressed, wrote me the following letter from Washington.

*Washington, Feb. 7, 1802.*

SIR,

Several applications having been made to me for the History of John Adams' Administration, which was to have been sent me long since for sale, and as the delay has tended to an imputation on my veracity, I think it proper to apply to you to give me such information on the nature of the delay as may enable me to justify myself.

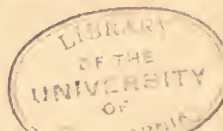
Should you have relinquished the design of publishing, I shall consider it as a matter of justice to me, that you return such letters as I have addressed to you, communicating hints and facts on the subject.

You will learn all that passes here from the public papers, as well as it could be conveyed in any way but by the eyes and ears. *Strange occurrences have arisen here*, but they all tend to an ultimate good. Do the republicans in N. Y. not mean to memorial on the judiciary repeal? Some influential men should stimulate *Dr. Mitchell* on the imbecility of the naturalization bill, produced by the committee of which he is chairman: *My friend Cheetham* should touch that subject, and enter as much into details of arguments and principles as possible, for the committee will otherwise sleep over it. *Smilie, from Pennsylvania, an Irishman*, is the only member on it zealous and active.

This city increases in population, convenience and comforts, and promises to be a great theatre of civil and political action in a few years.

I am, Sir, with respect, your obedient servant,

WM. DUANE.





Mr. Duane's observation upon Dr. Mitchell, and the imbecility of his naturalization bill, is worth notice, as it exemplifies, in a striking manner, the duplicity of his conduct ; for Duane was writing in this disrespectful manner of Dr. Mitchell to a stranger whom he never saw, at the very instant he was puffing up at Washington the political talents and oratorical powers of the chemical professor ; abusing the trustees of Columbia college because they dismissed the Dr. for leaving his charge, and sounding the discoveries of Mitchell throughout the United States.— This was exactly a parallel of his conduct towards Mr. Burr, when in this city at the book fair. He accepted of a family breakfast from Mr. M. L. Davis, at which Mr. W. P. Van Ness, Mr. Swartwout, and Capt. Sandford were present. It was not the desire of Mr. Davis, or his friends, to introduce the subject of the Narrative, which was then making some noise in the city ; they wished only to compliment Mr. Duane upon his arrival in New-York, and to converse with him on general topics ; yet did Mr. Duane, or his friends for him, propagate a report, that the breakfast was intended as a political snare to entrap the editor of the Aurora, and bring him over to the interest of Mr. Burr ; that Mr. Duane, with manly fortitude, rejected all their proposals, and listened to their arguments with contempt. That while Capt. Sandford stamped with his cane, and Mr. Davis bellowed with rage against De Witt Clinton and Cheetham, Mr. Duane should have preserved a respectful coolness of temper. Such was the story fabricated, and put in circulation, to impose upon an ignorant populace ; and to which Duane himself must have been, in some degree, accessory. That the deceitful editor wishes to impress sentiments of the same nature upon the public mind with regard to Mr. Burr, is evident from the following sentence in his letter of the 10th July, published in the



Aurora.—“ *I owe Mr. Burr neither gratitude for favours conferred, nor dislike for disservice; of his disposition to render me service I have had proof, of mine to maintain my independence he is not ignorant.*” To the friends of Mr. Burr, Mr. Duane apologized for not taking an immediate part in the dispute between them and the Clintonians; but promised he should do his duty to Mr. Burr in that respect, before the commencement of the Pennsylvania election. At a public dinner, in the house of Mr. Wortman, at which Riker, Cheetham, Jonathan Pearcée, jun. and the leading Clintonians were present, Duane was invited; here it appears, that the Aurora editor found himself more at his ease; he heard (it is said) with infinite satisfaction, the opprobrious epithets which were heaped on Mr. Burr,—entered himself into the spirit of their scurrility, and declared, the only reason which prevented him from aiding the efforts of Mr. Cheetham, in his attacks upon Mr. Burr, was the fear of dividing the republican votes in the Pennsylvania election. The same sentiment he avowed to several others; and in particular to a gentleman living at Newark. He told Mr. Ward, as also some of the friends of Mr. Burr, *that he approved of Mr. Burr's conduct in suppressing the History*; and yet he asserts, in his letter in the Aurora, that he thought it an extraordinary transaction. Such was the duplicity and opposite conduct of Mr. Duane, when in this city, towards Mr. Burr.—With the friends of the latter, he affected the warmest partiality towards the Vice-President. In company with the Clintonians, he espoused their cause, and dwelt with pleasure upon the dangerous intrigues of Mr. Burr; but in presence of the moderate republicans, he protested his intention was to remain an indifferent spectator to the disputes of both parties—to be a partizan of neither, but to support the present administration.—With regard to my

putting his letters into the hands of Mr. Burr, it was neither improper, nor by any means a breach of confidence. They were wrote to me for the avowed purpose of publishing their contents to the world ; no secrecy was attached to them—no private matters were contained in them, nor was there a single expression prohibiting me from quoting Mr. Duane as my authority for the facts which they contained. Had they been founded in truth, and not fabrications, Mr. Duane could have had no cause of complaint. This is evident from the anxiety which he expressed to have them returned ; he dreaded the consequences of others seeing them, and probably imagined, were I the only person who had perused them, he might very ingeniously have it in his power to dispute their contents ; for as to breach of confidence in respect to letters, Duane ought to blush when he uses the expression. A man, who was partly the means of ransacking, in a clandestine manner, the books of a public office—who did not hesitate to publish to the world the contents of letters evidently intended for the post-office—who glories in being the discloser of secrets and the unfolders of private caucuses, ought to veil himself from society ; to look to his own heart for consolation, and not appeal to the world, from whom he can only expect insult and bitter reproach.

The publication of the History, after being suppressed, is the only circumstance which can attach any blame or censure to the friends of Mr. Burr ; this was certainly an unguarded act, but it was done without Mr. Burr's knowledge, I suppose, to exculpate his character, and show the world his real motives for suppressing it.

This act, I confess, irritated me not a little against the friends of Mr. Burr, Mr. Van Ness in particular, and oc-

occasioned a short letter which I addressed to him on the occasion in the *American Citizen*; soon after the appearance of my letter to Mr. Van Ness, several queries were put to me in the *Citizen*, evidently with the design to draw forth some fresh information respecting Mr. Burr, and the suppression. Who they were wrote by I know not, although from several circumstances Mr. Riker appeared to me at the time to have been the author; he expressed a particular anxiety the first evening of their appearance, when I was in his company, that I should answer them, and for several days afterwards whenever he met me in the street, with a smiling countenance he would address me, "well, Wood, when are you to answer those Queries?"

During a temporary absence from New-York upon some private concerns, it is well known that the editor of the *Citizen* fabricated a story that I was bribed by the friends of Mr. Burr to abscond; no insinuation could have been more infamous than this. Mr. Cheetham must have been well satisfied from a letter I wrote to Mr. Jonathan Pearsee, jun. his intimate friend, that this was not the case. Mr. Cheetham, in short, was the only editor in New-York who had it in his power to have contradicted the report of my absconding; in place of which he gave the story additional currency by stating it as a question, whether or not the *little band* had sent me off. This very circumstance alone is sufficient to prove to any person of candour or common understanding, that the attacks made by the editor of the *Citizen*, upon the conduct of Mr. Burr, proceed not from motives of justice and patriotism, but from personal enmity, and a desire to exalt his patron Mr. De Witt Clinton, to the Vice Presidency of the United States. The enmity of Mr. Cheetham towards Mr. Burr, has been attributed to



various causes : I have endeavoured to investigate them, and it is with regret, I must confess, that I can trace the malice of this editor to no other source but that unnatural disposition which is found in the breasts of some men to stab, when opportunity offers, the heart of their greatest benefactor and most generous friend. Mr. Burr was certainly the friend and benefactor of Mr. Cheetham, not from any political motives, but from a desire of befriending to the utmost of his power every foreigner who arrives, that appears possessed of a show of talents and industry. Mr. Cheetham dare not deny that it was at the intercession of Mr. Burr alone, that Mr. Denniston accepted him as his partner in the American Citizen. The conversation which passed on that occasion is worth narrating, as it will exemplify Mr. Burr's zeal for having an impartial and well conducted paper in the city, while it will prove Mr. Burr's aversion to scurrility and personal abuse. After Mr. Burr was appointed Vice-President, Mr. Cheetham waited upon him and expressed a desire of becoming the editor of the Citizen, acquainting Mr. Burr at the same time with the extravagant demands which David Denniston required for the half of the establishment; Mr. Burr desired Mr. Cheetham to call upon him at an appointed hour along with Denniston. The original editor of the Citizen entered Mr. Burr's apartment without being introduced, upon which Mr. Burr inquired, with his usual politeness, the name of the stranger; Mr. Denniston, without giving time to Cheetham to answer, replied, "I am the editor of the Republican paper." What "Republican paper?" Mr. Burr naturally asked. The "American Citizen," replied Denniston. "You certainly do not call the American Citizen a Republican paper," was Mr. Burr's answer, knowing that the stupidity of the American Citizen at that period did no honour to



any cause. Mr. Denniston apologized in the best possible manner for the weakness of his talents, by candidly confessing he had received no education, and had just come from the plough. Mr. Burr, struck with astonishment at the ignorant simplicity of the man, inquired the motives which induced him to abandon his proper occupation, and commence the editor of a newspaper. Mr. Denniston answered, "*Sir, my cousins the Clinton family insisted upon my going to New-York after the death of Greenleaf, as they were unable to find a person so proper to support the cause of Republicanism.*" Mr. Burr, more and more surprised, asked if his cousins assisted him in the editorial department. "No (said Denniston) I do it all myself, and think it done very well." Several other observations followed on the part of Mr. Burr, which are unnecessary to mention; but which so mortified the then editor of the Citizen, that he willingly accepted Mr. Cheetham as a partner upon Cheetham's own terms. The truth of this conversation I think the reader may rely upon; I had it from two persons who received it from Cheetham and Denniston, who certainly would never fabricate a story that throws a stigma upon one of the partnership. I have every reason to suppose that it was Mr. Burr's desire that there should have been an impartial paper in New-York, devoted to the interest of no particular individual but to principle alone. Had the Citizen been conducted on that plan, it would have received not only the patronage of Mr. Burr, but of every independent Federalist and Anti-federalist, and of every honest man who might be desirous of knowing foreign and domestic transactions without the alloy of scurrility, and the rancour of personal calumny. But the mind of Cheetham and his talent of expression being only adapted for the vilest productions, the American Citizen soon degenerated from a mass of in-

coherent absurdity into that of Billingsgate abuse, defaming the brightest characters and vilifying the most virtuous citizens. It was then and then only, that the friends of Colonel Burr, and several independent republicans stepped forward, and regarded it their duty to withdraw their support from the paper ; and, if Mr. Cheetham pleases, he has it in his power to favour the public with a number of names which were ordered to be erased from his subscription list long before any attack upon Col. Burr ever appeared.

After my return to New-York, about the first of July, Mr. Riker and Mr. Cheetham again set on foot a new scheme in order to drag Mr. Burr before the public. A story was reported by them, to me, in the most plausible manner, that Mr. Burr censured my conduct in the severest terms ; that Mr. M. L. Davis propagated, upon the authority of Mr. Burr, that there was not a single truism in the Narrative ; and that I had never seen Mr. Burr above once or twice in my life, and then only for a few minutes ; in short, that all the circumstances relative to the suppression, must have been fabricated by myself. They advised, as the only possible means to vindicate my character, to write to Mr. Burr, requesting him to meet, upon those points, in presence of two of his own friends and two of mine.—Mr. Riker, and Mr. Jonathan Pearsee, jun.\* at the same time offered their service on my part, in order to examine the Vice-President. The following letter was accordingly drawn up by me, under erroneous impressions, in presence of Mr. Riker, who prohibited his own name to be mentioned, although he pledged his honour he would meet on the subject.

\* Mr. Pearsee was not present when the proposal was made ; but at the request of Mr. Riker, who sent Denniston to him on the business, he immediately complied.

SIR,

MY character and veracity having been considerably affected, owing to a report circulated by Mr. M. L. Davis, and your other friends, that I received no orders from you respecting the suppression of Adams' History ; I consider it necessary to give to the world a correct statement of that business ; but previous thereto, would esteem it a favour if you would oblige me with an interview, in presence of four gentlemen, two of whom you will be pleased to name, as I shall take the liberty of naming the other two. If this mode of interview should not meet with your approbation, you will be so obliging as to fix upon any other manner of communicating our sentiments, or meeting together, otherwise you will pardon me if I interpret your silence on the subject as an entire refusal of the request.

I remain, with the greatest respect,  
your obedient servant,

JOHN WOOD.

*Pine-street Academy, 4th July, 1802.*

One difficulty, however, presented itself—who should be the bearer of the letter ; as it was thought a matter of importance, that it should be delivered into the hands of Mr. Burr by some person of character, and not sent by the post-office. Cheetham and Denniston at once volunteered to be the bearers ; but I objected to the propriety of either of them going, as it evidently would have been insulting Mr. Burr. Mr. Riker, therefore, proposed Mr. Jonathan Pearsee, jun. as a proper person. Mr. Pearsee, accordingly, was spoken to, and accepted of the embassy ; but after having the letter in his possession a few hours, he declined going. Mr. John Fellows, on account of his gigantic figure, was the next person who was requested to



wait on Mr. Burr ; but Mr. Fellows, after some hours hesitation, objected to the mission. Mr. Crygier was then applied to, as being an acquaintance of Mr. Burr's ; but this gentleman, after consulting with his friends, also refused the honour which Mr. Riker wished to confer upon him. Several other persons were afterwards named by Mr. Riker, to whom Denniston was dispatched, in order to solicit their acceptance of being letter carrier in a business of importance to the party ; but nobody being found of hardiness enough to face Mr. Burr, Cheetham and Denniston at length thought of resorting to a taylor, who has lately been appointed messenger to the commissioners of bankruptcy. This poor fellow, although honest enough, was too stupid either to perceive the intent or meaning of their scheme, and would proudly have accepted of the offer, had not his friend, Ferguson, the new made secretary to the said commissioners, been present ; who, by expatiating on the necessary etiquette to be observed in entering the Vice-President's apartment, entirely disconcerted the nerves of the taylor, and frustrated the plan of Mr. Riker.—I mention these circumstances only to expose the low cunning which Riker and his friends, who are destitute of all candour, practise in order to effect their political designs ; for in any other case, anecdotes of this description would appear trifling. As to the letter, which I afterwards sent by a servant, it was not a matter respecting which I was very anxious. I confess I took some interest to ascertain how far the sincerity of Mr. Riker and his friends was to be relied on ; as I have no manner of doubt, had Mr. Burr complied with the request contained in the letter, that the *Deputy Attorney General*, notwithstanding his honour, would have shrunk from the interview like a felon conscious of his guilt. The office this



man holds, alone entitles him to any respect, either at the bar, or in private ;—stripped of the dignity which the Clintonian interest has conferred, he would soon fall back into his former station, neglected and despised, a frivolous conceited coxcomb, and quibbling attorney.

After the statement which I have given of the suppression, and for the truth of which, Mr. Ward, as well as others, will vouch, I believe there can be no man, however indifferent to the politics of parties, who will not readily allow, that the odium which has been thrown upon Mr. Burr, in the transaction of suppressing the History, has not only been unfounded, but altogether the effect of the jealousy and ambition of men, who are destitute of generosity, and who interpret every indifferent act, as a bar thrown in the road of their own preferment. But it fortunately happens, that calumnies of this nature, without injuring the individual upon whose head they are intended to fall, are of service to the public. They serve to bring forward such characters as Osgood, Wortman, and Riker, who would fain be thought to take no part themselves, but meanly skulk behind the shoulders of some fellow like the editor of the Citizen, and give their bully such advice as they have neither spirit to avow or defend. I am almost ashamed to sport so often with the name of the Deputy Attorney General, but his conduct towards all parties provokes resentment, while the insignificance of his person and abilities, which are distorted by conceit, also rouse indignation, and make the creature at once both hateful and contemptible.

The reflections which the editor of the Narrative offers on the suppression, are in the highest degree trifling and

absurd. His first assertion is, that the right of purchasing literary productions, by individuals, is more pernicious than the regular abridgment of the freedom of the press by law. In answer to this, I shall only observe, that while printers' devils can be bought, and characters such as the author of the Narrative, can bribe, the suppression of literary productions, by individuals, will always prove abortive, and will ultimately tend only to make the intended suppression notoriously public. The author of the Narrative, in his disingenuous style, proceeds, "This practice (the practice of suppression) is peculiarly inauspicious in a Vice-President; it is ominous of a subtle, dangerous, and unfriendly disposition;—it bespeaks a desire to cherish vice by concealment, and to elevate it upon the ruins of virtue."—The above language might be pardonable in a man ignorant of the contents of the suppressed work, or who had reason to believe that its publicity would benefit mankind; but what epithet of reproach will not the reader bestow upon this political hypocrite, when he is informed, that he not only had a printed copy in his possession, but had perused it, and confessed to his friends its inaccuracy, and libellous nature.—Yet these are facts, which, when necessary, can be proved. With his natural effrontery, he judges of the feelings of the public by the coldness of his own, and affirms, that it will not be believed that Mr. Burr would voluntarily offer twelve hundred dollars to shield Mr. Wood from federal prosecutions. As I have already stated Mr. Burr's motives for the suppression, I shall not discuss this question with the Narrative writer, whose heart is callous to every mark of benevolence, who feels not for the frailties of others, but rejoices at the vices of the world, and is overwhelmed with sorrow at the appearance of virtue. He says also, that the story is too

Quixotic to be accredited in this *age of reason*. This is a subject upon which, if I pleased, I might torture his soul, and compel some precious confessions. I could ask the Narrative writer who the infidel was, that established *Driscoll and his temple of reason* in this city, and what the infidel's motives were afterwards for withdrawing his money which he lent to Driscoll ; whether or not his intention was to publish privately the same Temple of Reason, and to procure his friend, blind Palmer, to be the editor. I could, moreover, put a number of serious questions to the Narrative writer ; but I shall not, as Callander has done his antagonist, suspend him on a gibbet for the basest of crimes ; nor like Doctor Rigdum, trace the vaporous school where he learnt his ethics. I shall rather leave the flaming pamphleteer, who now, under the banners of Riker and Wortman, scorches the little band, to sink with his patriots into that obscurity into which they are all fast hastening.

The public may, however, ask the solution of one question, why Mr. Burr should have been desirous of concealing his name in a transaction which was certainly laudable. No circumstance attending the suppression can be better explained than this ; it is evident, from the letter addressed by me to Barlas and Ward, that it was not Mr. Burr's intention that I should abandon the idea of writing a correct History of the last administration. He was only desirous that the incorrect edition should be buried in oblivion ; that it should never be known that there were men who assumed the appellation of republicans, and were themselves either natives or citizens of the United States, base enough to fabricate falsehoods, and in the most plausible manner, to impose them upon a stranger, in order to send them forth to the world in the pompous form of an octavo



volume. The suspicious and cold hearted Clintonian, may still demand, why this correct edition did not take place ;—an answer is ready, and which will carry conviction to every honest mind. The folly of Barlas, with the malice of Riker, Wortman, and Cheetham, made the original suppression public ; at the same time, they veiled the transaction in such mysterious cloathing, as rendered any farther interference on the part of Mr. Burr, highly improper. As to the after publication of the History, it was done, as I have stated, without Mr. Burr's knowledge, and in his absence ; nor did this even take place until Mr. Van Ness had certain information that Mr. Cheetham and others had purloined copies in their possession ; and that there was every probability of spurious copies being published in different parts of the United States.

There are several trifling incidents which I have stated in the preceding pages, that it may be necessary to explain before I take my leave of the subject of the suppression.—I have mentioned that I informed Mr. Burr, that Doctor Wilson, of Columbia College, was an intimate acquaintance of Mr. Barlas, and probably would have it in his power to persuade him to accede to reasonable terms. Mr. Burr, I understand, waited for that purpose on Doctor Wilson ; the conversation which passed between them I believe was short, as the Doctor was under the necessity of attending the duties of his class at the hour at which Mr. Burr called. Doctor Wilson certainly declined interfering in the business, but his reason, I believe, was not that mentioned in the Narrative, “ That the work was to be suppressed to favour some federal gentlemen, whose characters he did not admire.” I rather imagine his motives proceeded from a desire of avoiding any political controversy, which he pro-



bably imagined would take place, if the suppression became public. I mention this not with the intention of throwing a reflection upon Dr. Wilson, but to destroy any erroneous impression which the note in the Narrative respecting him may have occasioned.

It has been stated that Mr. Wortman betrayed his trust by lending the History, which he received from Messrs. Barlas and Ward, with the express orders only to peruse it himself, but on no consideration to allow that privilege to another. This circumstance merits a little attention, as it will serve both to unfold the species of integrity which Wortman possesses, as well as from some circumstances which attended the absence of the book, to lead the reader to the main prompter of the Narrative. After Wortman had the book in his possession, I requested the loan of it from Mr. Ward, in order to show it to Mr. Riker, to have his opinion on several libellous passages, as at that time Messrs. Barlas and Ward had not decided whether they would prosecute Mr. Burr, or publish the History. I accordingly received the book and gave it to Mr. Riker; but the evening previous to Mr. De Witt Clinton's departure, for the seat of government, Mr. Wortman sent for the book, as he said it would affect a suit against Mr. Burr, if the History should be lent out or read. Yet, notwithstanding this declaration of Mr. Wortman's, it appeared before ten days afterwards upon Mr. Van Ness's application, to have all the copies in his possession, that Mr. Wortman himself gave the book away to some acquaintance, who, most probably was no other but Mr. De Witt Clinton, both from the circumstance of his requesting to have it the evening before that Senator left town, as well as from the length of time which elapsed after being demanded by Mr. Van

Ness, until it was returned. No other conclusion, in fact, can be formed ; for if the book had been sent to any indifferent acquaintance, Mr. Wortman, as he was obliged to confess his breach of trust, would have had no objection to have mentioned the name of the person in whose possession it was ; this openness would even have palliated his guilt, but to have revealed the name of De Witt Clinton, would have at once unhinged the design of the faction, and brought to view the *Grand Master of the Great Band*. If we consider Mr. Wortman, as acting upon this occasion the humble servant of Mr. Clinton, he certainly deserves the merit which is due to a dark intriguer, and in this respect his countenance by no means betrays his conduct ; but I hope the circumstance will also serve a useful purpose, and remain a lasting index of the degree of confidence which may be placed in Counsellor Wortman.

I have mentioned that I had several interviews with the author of the Narrative, previous to the publication of that pamphlet. The reader will, therefore, naturally expect that I should know the sources from which he had received his information. When the Narrative writer declared to me his intention of publishing a statement of the business, he drew from his desk a parcel of sheets containing all the circumstances relating to the suppression, which he had collected from every individual, who, like Barlas, had folly enough to be duped by the crafty Clintonian. I objected, after reading them, to a number of the incidents which he had either fabricated himself, or had been imposed upon him by others. I attempted to reason with him upon the impropriety, as well as stupidity, of publishing a statement which I should disprove, and which would be demonstrated not only incorrect, but as proceeding from malicious

motives ; he heard, with a sarcastic smile, my account of the business, and said, *whatever might be written, he would engage Mr. Burr should not contradict it.* The writer of the Narrative, from a long acquaintance with Mr. Burr, knew that his natural disposition, independent of the station which he holds, would never suffer him to descend to a paper war with a writer of pamphlets. From Mr. Burr, therefore, he thought he had nothing to fear ; and he probably imagined, from the circumstantial proofs which accompanied his Narrative, as well as the friendly terms upon which he and I stood, that I would not call the truth of his statement in question, even although he had the assurance, or rather baseness, to insert in it a false and incorrect letter, with my name subscribed, having been unable to procure a copy of the original one.

Respecting the proposed corrected, or second edition of the History, the Narrative mentions, that Col. Burr, “was to furnish materials for writing new biographies of the President, Mr. Hamilton, C. C. Pinckney, Dayton, &c. He was also to supply him with such matter as would make the work appear almost entirely new. It was determined that the negociation should be prosecuted with less vigour ; that it should be carried on in such a way as would be nearly equivalent to a suspension. During this relaxation, Mr. Wood was to compose a new history of the administration, preserving such parts only of the old one as accorded with the views of the Vice-President :—And, as expedition was the soul of the expedient, an assistant to Mr. Wood was to be procured. Mr. Cornelius Van Ness, brother to Mr. William P. Van Ness, was mentioned by Mr. Burr, as a trusty person, and truly fitted for the office. This young gentleman was to arrange the facts, and to lay them



before Mr. Wood, sheet by sheet, in such order as that he might easily give to them his classical dress. As the sheets were thus written, they were to be sent to Mr. William A. Davis, the printer, who, it was supposed, could work off an edition of twelve hundred and fifty copies (the number of Barlas and Ward's edition) in twelve or fourteen days. This was to be done with that secrecy and promptitude which characterizes the movements of the Vice-President." I have thought proper to transcribe this paragraph at large, to serve as a specimen of the wanton faculty which the writer of the Narrative possesses for fabrication. Mr. Burr, as I have already stated, only intended to have pointed out the different mistakes into which I had been led ; and if a new edition had gone on, to have, perhaps, directed me to sources where I might have had a view of the transactions of the administration, without that mixture of falsehood and scurrility which is found in newspapers devoted to opposite parties.

The letter which I addressed to Mr. Van Ness in the *American Citizen*, after the publication of the History, will, without doubt, be seized upon by Mr. Riker and his friends; every sentence will be scrutinized, and every word laid hold of by the critical paw of the *Citizen*, in order to show my enmity to Mr. Burr: but even that letter will, by every candid person, be regarded only as the effect of a momentary difference, when both Mr. Van Ness and myself laboured under erroneous impressions, when we were both deceived and when the artful cunning of Clintonian dependents had created in a manner a temporary animosity between us. I spoke in that letter something about Mr. Van Ness having threatened prosecutions. In the queries which were afterwards put to me in the *Citizen*, I was ask-



ed what these prosecutions were ; I promised to answer the question at a future period. I now embrace the opportunity. Mr. Van Ness justly supposed, that most probably there would be prosecutions instituted against me by some of the federal party, unless a proper explanation was given. He was inclined to believe I suppose from malevolent reports, that so far from apologizing for the mistatements I had made in the History, I was resolved to persevere, and insist upon their correctness, at the same time that I would calumniate Mr. Burr, for his endeavours to suppress the work. This was the only idea I am certain Mr. Van Ness entertained, when he mentioned the phrase prosecutions.

I have been compelled, more than once, in the course of the preceding pages, to mark the folly of the bookseller Barlas. Nothing can be more irksome or disagreeable than to torture beings of his description ; it affords no amusement to the reader, and only pain to the writer ; but, as almost all the unfortunate incidents which have taken place, and all the noise respecting the suppression, have originated from him alone, it was, on my part, an unavoidable duty. The fretful uneasiness—the suspicious anxiety—the servile meanness, and the hypocritical cunning which he displayed every moment, were perhaps never equalled by any of his profession. His racing about, from friend to foe, to inform them of his transaction with the *Vice-President*, cannot be better described than in Pope's humorous description of Bernard, in the *Dunciad* ; and with these ludicrous lines, I shall take leave of my friend Barlas.

As when a dab chick waddles thro' the copse,  
On feet, and wings, and flies, and wades, and hops,  
So lab'ring on with shoulders, hands, and head,  
Wide as a Windmill all his figure spread  
With Arms expanded Barlas row'd his state.

The designs of the Clintonians are also apparent, from another pamphlet published by the writer of the Narrative ; but the assertions there made, it is not my intention to disprove or discuss. I wish neither to be the advocate of Mr. Burr nor Mr. Jefferson, or in short any one individual in preference to another in America. The mistakes into which I have been led, both as to characters and events, ought to be a caution to every foreigner, not to embark too rashly in the support of any party, either federal or anti-federal. I have, however, considered it a task, which I particularly owed to those whom I have involved, and whose names I have dragged before the public, to give this correct statement of the political transaction in which I have been engaged. At the same time that I take this farewell of party controversy, I must declare, that no one laments more than I do, the unhappy differences which have arisen among the citizens of the United States.

The cause of republicanism suffers more by such divisions, than by either the fetters of kings, or the dungeons of despots. The real friends of liberty are truly disgusted, while the pretended patriot rejoices at the prospect before him, and hopes to share in those spoils which ambition and discord have created. I am well aware, that an infidel host, regardless either of truth or honour, will pour forth the venom of their malice against me ; but their arguments, as well as their billingsgate, I shall leave to the credulity of men, whom ignorance may cause to be ensnared. I know the pitiful advantage that will be taken of unguarded words that may have been dropped in the moment of error, when breathing the noxious fumes of Clintonian abuse, and when surrounded, if I may be allowed the expression, by an encrustation of the vilest deceit. I think I see the villainous

mind of the Aurora editor, searching every nerve of his dark and poisonous brain for fresh ideas of calumny and slander. I behold the Citizen bully, in the chamber of the Deputy Attorney General, with Wortman at his elbow, and the basest fabrications before him. Perhaps this language may appear too passionate—perhaps it may be thought to savour too much of that of my enemies; but it is the expression of truth, the sentiment of my breast, and the words of experience. I have now done my duty to myself and the Citizens of the Union. It belongs to them, and not to me, to discard the factious; and to advise all honest men to unite for the benefit of their country, and the preservation of their Constitution.



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